



NEWS RELEASE

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NOAA FISHERIES AND AMERICAN SPORTFISHING ASSOCIATION PROVIDE \$1 MILLION TO RESTORE FISH HABITAT

*Alaska, Florida, Louisiana, Maine, Oregon, New Hampshire and South Carolina Among
States to Gain Funding for Local Habitat Restoration Efforts*

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA fisheries), an agency of the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the American Sportfishing Association announced today nearly \$1 million in funding for projects this year to help communities restore coastal and marine habitats, benefitting our nation's fisheries.

This is the first series of projects NOAA fisheries and the American Sportfishing Association's FishAmerica Foundation will fund under a new three-year partnership agreement. These awards build upon work the two organizations have jointly conducted over the past three years.

"Degradation and loss of habitat is one of the leading causes of declining fish stocks. NOAA's partnership with the American Sportfishing Association over the past three years has witnessed a tremendous growth in dedicated funding for the improvement of fish habitat," said Scott Gudes, NOAA acting administrator. "We are very pleased to be engaged in such a productive partnership and to be making the announcement of projects selected in the first year of a renewed relationship with FishAmerica."

The NOAA Restoration Center and FishAmerica began partnering in fisheries habitat restoration in 1998. During the first three years, they co-funded 72 projects to benefit marine and anadromous fish resources across the nation, such as dam removals, fish passage improvements, sea-grass plantings, wetlands restoration, kelp bed restoration, streambank stabilization, coral reef and mangrove restoration, and invasive-plant-removal projects.

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Today's announcement of 31 new projects raises the number of joint projects to 103. Projects include dam removals in New Hampshire and Maine, restoration of oyster reefs in South Carolina, creation of artificial reefs in Louisiana, restoration of wetlands in Florida and restoration of river habitats in Oregon and Alaska. Local organizations leverage approximately \$5 in additional public and private funding for every \$1 invested by the partnership.

"The American Sportfishing Association cares deeply about each on-the-ground restoration project, each sport fishery with its future in doubt and each community whose economic health is threatened," said Mike Nussman, president and CEO, American Sportfishing Association. "By listening carefully to the communities who best know the local environment, our partnership with NOAA will strategically repair many of our nation's most precious coastal resources."

NOAA fisheries provides federal support for the partnership through its Community-Based Restoration Program, which works with community organizations to support effective habitat restoration projects in marine, estuarine and riparian areas since 1996. NOAA Restoration Center staff work closely with communities to aid in project development and implementation. Projects are monitored and maintained by communities, promoting stewardship and a heightened appreciation for the environment and its well-being.

"More and more of our communities are working with us to become active stewards in the restoration of local marine habitat. This strong momentum for public-private partnerships is good news for fish and for coastal communities nationwide," said NOAA Fisheries Director Bill Hogarth.

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA fisheries) is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources through scientific research, management, enforcement, and the conservation of marine mammals and other protected marine species and their habitat. To learn more about NOAA fisheries, please visit <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>

The FishAmerica Foundation, the conservation arm of the American Sportfishing Association, helps industry and citizens enhance fisheries resources. In the past 19 years, FishAmerica helped fund nearly 700 fisheries enhancement projects valued at \$5 million in all 50 states and Canada.

For more information on habitat restoration, see the NOAA Community-Based Restoration Program Web site, <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>

For more information on American Sportfishing Association's FishAmerica Foundation, see its Web site, <http://www.asafishing.org>